



## **The 2020 Census**

Every 10 years, the federal government conducts a census to count all people in the United States. Everyone should be counted without exception — and you can make that happen. You can fill out the census online, by phone, or by the mail (just remember: don't lick the envelope!). Online, it takes just 10 minutes.

An accurate census count is vital to a strong democracy. Responding to the census is our civic duty. This is something you can now do from home because the census is moving forward.

As a result of the current health crisis, the U.S. Census Bureau has delayed a few originally planned outreach operations for a couple of weeks, but self-response from American residents has always been the most critical part of the census and self-response to the census is going on now.

Responding to the census has never been easier, and it is something we can all do from home during this self-isolation period. You can respond online, over the phone or by mail without having to meet a census taker or have any in-person interactions. You can find step by step assistance and phone numbers here: <https://2020census.gov/en/contact-us.html>. The U.S. Census Bureau website is here: <https://www.census.gov>.

### **Why Should I Participate?**

The census is a fundamental pillar of our democracy and our constitutional structure, determining both members of Congress and Electoral College votes for each state. The data also informs our nation's most important decisions, including how the federal government spends \$900 billion on critical services like building roads, funding health care programs, and supporting education.

The census count is used to apportion representation in Congress and in drawing congressional and state legislative districts. Apportionment is based on the number of people who live in a district. If there is an undercount in a state, that state could lose a member of Congress and part of their voice in our government.



In addition to losing representation in Congress, an undercount would distort the distribution of resources. For example, an area with a census undercount could lose out on government funding that is tied to that area's population.

Depressing census response rates in already underrepresented communities will allow politicians to draw even more skewed legislative districts and further dilute the political power of these communities.

The ACLU is hard at work making sure our democracy survives this national health crisis, but responding to the census is something that everybody can do to help ensure the future of our democracy. Responding to the census is our civic duty. Everybody should do their part.

Check out our 2020 Census FAQ resource here: <https://www.aclu.org/other/frequently-asked-questions-national-census>.

### **There is NO Citizenship Question**

The Trump administration tried to include a citizenship question on this year's census, but the ACLU took them to the Supreme Court and won. **There is NO citizenship question on this year's census.** By the administration's own estimate, the question would have resulted in an undercount of 6.5 million people.

The entire purpose of the census survey, as required by the Constitution, is to get an accurate headcount of all persons living in the U.S., regardless of legal status.

### **Why is the 2020 Census Important for Mississippi?**

You might have heard the saying, "A healthy agriculture is dependent on a healthy local community and vice versa." One ingredient in assessing the health of a community is an accurate picture of its situation. The U.S. Census has been important since 1790, and the upcoming 2020 Census will be crucial to Mississippi.



**The major uses of the decennial Census are for:**

1. Political apportionment for federal representation (House of Representatives).
2. Determining government funding for multiple purposes (rural development, infrastructure, health and education programs, etc.).
3. Classifying communities urban or rural for purposes of resource distribution.
4. A host of private and public economic decisions (where to place businesses, schools, firehouses, etc.).

In 2003, Mississippi's number of U.S. representatives decreased based on population counts in the 2000 Census. Although another seat loss is not estimated, undercounts on top of our stagnant population gains would further risk our representation in the U.S. House. Mississippi receives over \$2 for every \$1 we pay in federal taxes. Focusing on the 55 federal programs with the greatest spending determined by Census data, researchers at George Washington University estimated that Mississippi received more than \$10.1 billion in fiscal year 2016. This was directly influenced by data collected from the Census and the American Community Survey, which uses the decennial Census as the base.

We hope you are starting to get a picture of the importance of you, your family and your neighbors being active participants in the 2020 Census. Postcard mailouts will begin in March, and official Census Day is April 1.

Some concerns for full participation in Mississippi are online access and hard-to-count/expected low response areas. The 2020 Census is the first census where online access will be available and encouraged. Because many rural areas in Mississippi have limited broadband internet access, this could present a challenge.

**Political apportionment for federal representation (House of Representatives)**

The American Revolution was, in part, a contest about the very definition of representation. In England, the House of Commons represented every British subject regardless of whether the subject could actually vote for its membership. In this sense, most people living in areas under



British rule—including North America—were only “virtually represented” in Parliament. American colonists, who were used to controlling their local affairs in the directly-elected colonial legislatures, lacked a voice in Parliament and resented the British policies imposed on them. Thus, they rallied behind the now familiar motto: “No taxation without representation!”

After the war, the founders struggled to design a system of government to better represent the inhabitants of the new country than did the British model which once governed them. The Articles of Confederation created the first national congress to represent the interests of the states: each state would appoint between two and seven delegates to the congress, and each state delegation would have one vote.

Congress has capped the number of Representatives at 435 since the Apportionment Act of 1911 except for a temporary increase to 437 during the admission of Hawaii and Alaska as states in 1959. As a result, over the last century, congressional districts have more than tripled in size—from an average of roughly 212,000 inhabitants after the 1910 Census to about 710,000 inhabitants following the 2010 Census. Each state’s congressional delegation changes as a result of population shifts, with states either gaining or losing seats based on population. While the number of House Members for each state is determined according to a statistical formula in federal law, each state is then responsible for designing the shape of its districts so long as it accords with various provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which seeks to protect racial minorities’ voting and representation rights.

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